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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001958

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TAGS: PHUM PNAT KDEM I2

SUBJECT: SADR CITY DAC MEMBERS ON SECTARIAN DISPLACEMENT,  
SECURITY "VOLUNTEERS"

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARGARET SCOBAY, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)  
AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. On June 5, PolOffs met with Sadr City District Advisory Council members to discuss their assessment of security and human rights abuses. DAC Chairman Juwad Kadhem Al-Atabi, Deputy Chairman Abbas Ali Al-Tamimi, and member of the Sadr City human rights committee Dr. Haider Jabr Zedan told PolOffs that displacement of Shia primarily from Abu Ghreib and Western Iraq remained a serious problem. The members also complained about the lack of rule of law stemming from insufficient security forces, and insisted that up to 1,000 local volunteers were needed to supplement MoI and MoD forces manning Sadr City checkpoints. PolOffs argued at length that this was not the case. End Summary.

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DISPLACEMENT IN SADR CITY STILL A PROBLEM  
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¶2. (C) On June 5, Sadr City Chairman, Deputy Chairman, and human rights committee member told Poloffs that the displacement of Shia to Sadr City remained a critical problem. Dr. Haider estimated that up to 2000 displaced Shia families primarily from Abu Ghreib and Anbar lived in Sadr city alone. A large number of these displaced individuals, he reported, were still using schools as their shelters, making some classrooms inaccessible to students. When asked whether Sadr City had seen a change in the level of displacements, Dr. Haider said there had been a small decrease over the past two weeks, but not by much. He said that, during that period, about 200 families had come to Sadr City.

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SECURITY "VOLUNTEERS"  
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¶3. (C) Deputy Chairman Al-Tamimi emphasized to PolOffs that the current MoI and MoD presence was insufficient to provide adequate security in Sadr City. Both he and the chairman asserted that 1,000 Sadr City residents were needed to supplement the current forces, and "assist" with checkpoints. These "volunteers" would be able to identify which individuals were from the neighborhood, thereby facilitating the entry of residents and making the checkpoints more "efficient".

¶4. (C) Al-Atabi indicated that the DAC had set up an operations room to coordinate this effort, and that some volunteers had already begun to help with the endeavor. PolOffs asked if these volunteers already belonged to organized groups (e.g., Jaysh al-Mahdi). Al-Tamimi insisted that the volunteers had no affiliations.

¶5. (C) PolOffs strongly argued against using private citizens

to man checkpoints and act in an official security capacity. PolOffs stressed that such security activities needed to be undertaken by official MoI employees who were not only trained and uniformed for the job, but who represented the GoI and were accountable to the government and the people. PolOffs urged the DAC members to bring their security concerns to the attention of appropriate Iraqi authorities. PolOffs noted that the USG has at different points expressed opposition to the concept of "security volunteers", Al-Atabi and Al-Tamimi responded by saying that full operations have not been set up for this reason.

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CHECKPOINT DISCRIMINATON AGAINST SUNNIS?  
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¶6. (C) PolOffs asked the district council members about reports that Iraqis were being stopped at Sadr City checkpoints if their names indicated they were Sunni. Deputy Chairman al-Tamimi obliquely rebutted this question saying that in the well-known Jamila produce market, most of the vendors were Sunni farmers commuting from the Anbar region. He did acknowledge, however, that during the past couple of weeks these vendors had refrained from coming because of fears of retaliation in the aftermath of the kidnapping of a Tae Kwon Doe team who were mainly residents of Sadr City. Al-Tamimi scoffed at the idea that these vendors would be targeted saying: "we could kidnap 13,000 even without people coming in, so there is no reason why we would target these particular vendors".

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COMMENT  
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¶7. (C) Though claiming to be independent, the Deputy Chairman reportedly has strong ties to Jaysh al-Mahdi. Therefore the references to volunteers are difficult to evaluate and could be a reference to JAM members. Dr. Haider, an apparent moderate and a recent IV recipient, expressed his fear of Sadr City residents relying too heavily on Sadr offices for help with services. "If the DAC cannot respond to Sadr City residents" he said in a side conversation, "then they will go to Sadr offices and learn to depend on the Sadrists".

KHALILZAD